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PRESS RELEASE
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USAID Announces 32 Winners of the USAID/Nigeria COVID-19 Food Security Challenge

12 Winners are Women-Led Businesses, 31 are New USAID Partners

USAID/Nigeria announces the selection of 32 winners of their COVID-19 Food Security Challenge. The winning small and medium enterprises will receive awards totaling \$4 million in funding and technical assistance to implement their solutions that improve food security in Nigeria. This competition was run in partnership with USAID's Exploratory Programs and Innovation Competitions (EPIC) Team in the Innovation, Technology, and Research Hub within the Bureau for Development, Democracy, and Innovation.

Nigeria currently faces a food security crisis that is compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has significantly disrupted already fragile agricultural value chains across the country, including smallholder farmers' ability to produce, process, and distribute food. This disruption to agricultural productivity and limited access to markets has a negative impact on livelihoods, especially among the most vulnerable households, women, and youth.

To address this food security crisis, USAID/Nigeria, in partnership with EPIC, launched the COVID-19 Food Security Challenge in April 2021. The Challenge is partnering with commercially viable youth-led and mid-stage companies in Nigeria to improve food production, processing, and distribution. Over the next year, the Challenge will support the winners as they implement and scale their sustainable, local, and food-based models and increase incomes for smallholder farmers across Nigeria.

After receiving over 500 applications to the Challenge, USAID/Nigeria selected 19 youth-led companies (led by young people up to 29 years of age) and 13 mid-stage companies (with an existing customer base of at least 1,000 people) that are working across 33 states in Nigeria. USAID/Nigeria is proud to announce that 12 of the winners are women-led businesses and 31 of the winners are partners new to USAID. Some of the innovations that USAID/Nigeria is funding through this Challenge include online platforms that connect farmers to customers and services; access to solar refrigeration to extend the freshness of fruits, vegetables, and meat in off-grid communities; organic fertilizer made from converted biowaste; and micro-lending organizations to help smallholder farmers gain access to finance.

The winning companies will use USAID/Nigeria's funding and technical assistance to rapidly expand their food production and food security activities to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on Nigeria's food value chain and improve the resilience of vulnerable households.

To learn more about the Challenge and its winners, visit the [USAID/Nigeria COVID-19 Food Security Challenge's website](#).

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